

Fort Missoula
N.C.O. Living Quarters
In Fort Missoula on the north bank of the
Bitter Root River
Missoula
Missoula County
Montana

HABS No. MON-14

HABS
MONT
32-MISS
2-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
801 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20006

N. C. O. LIVING QUARTERS

Fort Missoula, Missoula County, Montana

ADDRESS: Fort Missoula, Missoula, Montana
OWNER: Fort Missoula Historical Society
OCCUPANT: none
USE: none

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Missoula is closely associated with the U. S. Indian Reservation Policy of 1871 when President U. S. Grant ordered the Flathead Indians removed from the Bitterroot Valley. Fearing Indian uprisings and because of the necessity to guard the famed Mullan Road, local inhabitants repeatedly asked Congress to establish a fort in the area.

Troops arrived in Missoula in the summer of 1877 and began building a fort. Construction was interrupted when Chief Joseph led the Nez Perce people in their attempt to flee to freedom from northern Idaho through this area via the nearby Lolo Pass and up the Bitterroot Valley. The soldiers from Fort Missoula tried to stop Chief Joseph in Lolo Canyon, failed, and returned to the fort. Later some of them participated in the Big Hole Battle under Col. John Gibbon.

The N.C.O. Living Quarters building is one of three structures remaining from this early day fort. The others are the stone Powder Magazine (MON-13) and the other is a log building used today as a Reserve Officers Club building.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In 1871 the U. S. government ordered the moving of the Flathead Indians from the Bitterroot Valley to a reservation north of Missoula. The Indians did not actually move for about twenty years, but they resented the efforts to make them leave the area. Local residents were aware of the Indians' dissatisfaction, and feared they would take the warpath. Repeated demands were made through the Montana representative to Congress, Major Martin Maginnis, for a military fort to protect the settlers and the Mullan Road.

Lt. Col. C. C. Gilbert of the 7th Infantry planted the flagpole on the site in June, 1877, and left two companies there to build the fort under the command of Captain C. C. Rawn. Construction was interrupted a few weeks later when news came that Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce were trying to leave Idaho where they had been ordered to go to a reservation.

Rawn and a group of 50 soldiers and 100 civilian volunteers built barricades in Lolo Canyon in an attempt to block the Indians' flight. However, at a parley, Joseph insisted that all he wanted was peaceful passage through the Bitterroot Valley, and the civilians returned home. The Indians then bypassed the soldiers' position, leaving them to withdraw to Fort Missoula. Captain Rawn, however, retains the distinction of being the only commander of the fort to direct action against the Indians.

Later the Nez Perce were overtaken by Col. John Gibbon and troops from Fort Shaw at the Big Hole Basin, and here a battle took place in which the Indians were victors and resumed their flight towards Canada. Indian prisoners were taken to Fort Missoula after this battle.

Chief Joseph and his people continued their flight through the Yellowstone Park area, then north towards Canada. It was not until September 30, 1877, that they were captured by Col. Nelson Miles at the base of the Bear Paw Mountains only a short distance from their goal. Unlike other military forts built in the northwest and later abandoned in the 1880's when the Indian problem was finally settled, Fort Missoula has had a record of service, though not continuous, over the past ninety years.

Of historical note is the Bicycle Corps formed at Fort Missoula. Lt. James Ross conceived the idea that the Army should have regular bicycle troops, like the Cavalry. In 1896 he led a squad from this corps on an 800 mile trip through Yellowstone Park, and the next year was granted permission to take the 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps (negro troops) on a 1,900 mile demonstration march. Moss and a twenty-three man detail carrying full field equipment and plagued by rain and mud most of the way completed a trek to St. Louis in forty days. The trip was a success, but the coming of the automobile prevented the expansion of the Bicycle Corps.

This building represents a type of living quarters provided for non-commissioned officers of the post-Civil War period. This duplex for the Ordinance and Commissary sergeants' families was one of many such buildings arranged in a row facing the parade ground. They provided minimum, but militarily acceptable, housing for the N.C.O. personnel.

When buildings along the N.C.O. row were being torn down during one of the inactive periods of the fort the siding was stripped from this building for salvage and the true structure -- of ax-hewn logs dating back to the earlier days of the fort -- was revealed. The building was consequently allowed to remain as a reminder of past times, but was neglected and is today in sad need of repair.

The building and the small plot it stands on belong to the Fort Missoula Historical Society. Efforts are being made to raise funds for restoration; it is the only family living quarters structure left standing today.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL AND SOURCES

- Bozeman Courier, Bozeman, Montana, May 31, 1929.
Burlingame, M. G., The Montana Frontier, State Publishing Co., Helena, 1942.
Hart, Herbert H., Old Forts of the Northwest, Superior Publishing Co., Seattle, 1963.
Leeson, M. A., History of Montana, 1729-1885, Warner, Beers & Co., Chicago, 1885.
Mattison, Ray H., The Army Posts of the Northern Plains, 1865-1885, Oregon Trail Museum Assn., Nebraska, 1954.
The Missoulian, Missoula, Mont., May 23, 1965.
Montana, A State Guide Book, Federal Writers Project, W. P. A., The Viking Press, New York, 1939.

AUTHORITIES CONSULTED

Brig. Gen. W. M. Johnson (U.S.A. retired), Missoula, Montana. An officer stationed at the fort between the two World Wars.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions - A T-shaped duplex structure. The front (north-south wing) is 21'-2" x 27'-7"; the east-west wing is 31'-0" x 31'-2".

Foundation - not visible.

Wall Construction - logs 10" to 12" in diameter. Two different methods of log construction is visible -- one the American log type of corner detailing, and the other having a similar cornering but with the logs obliquely notched.

Openings - Entrances: Each of the dwellings has a four panelled front door 2'-8" x 6'-8½" on the north facade and a rear exit on the south.

Windows: 6/6 double hung windows 2'-10" x 4'-8".

Roof - wood shingles; pitch approximately 33½° for both wings.

Chimneys - three, of brick.

INTERIOR

Floor Plan - The T-shaped duplex is centrally divided by a log wall built in the same fashion as the exterior walls. The two sections are identical with the exception of a door substituted for a window in the east section which is believed to be a later addition.

The rooms' original usages can only be guessed at. The front room measures 12'-0" x 9'-7" and has a hatch to a basement storage area beneath most of the front room area. An interior doorway leads to a second room, 14'-2" x 9'-7" in size. These two rooms (in each apartment) complete the north-south wing of the building. The almost square east-west wing measures 31'-2" x 31'-0" and has two rooms in each section. The foremost room measures 14'-8" x 31'-0" and the rear room measures 14'-10" x 14'-5".

The two rear rooms of the two apartments are connected by an interior doorway almost centrally located on the dividing wall. A major portion of this load-bearing, central dividing partition has been removed in the front rooms of the apartments and no doubt the connection between the rear rooms was cut through at this time.

Floor - T & G pine.

Wall and Ceiling Finish -- plaster applied over ½" x ½" wood strips nailed to the logs by 1" x 2" furring strips -- probably a later addition to the log-and-chink exterior walls.

Doors - none remaining.

Trim - squared planking.

Heating - remains indicate that each living space had wood stoves in the third and fourth rooms connected to chimneys built upon knee braces adjacent to the ceiling. Another such chimney support serves the two front rooms of each apartment.

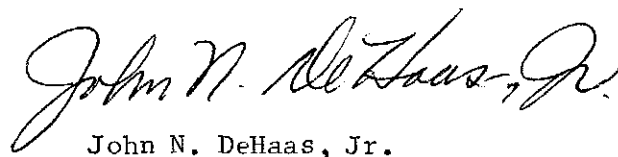
Heart
30 M152
2

MON-14
Page 5

GENERAL SETTING

This is the only N.C.O. building remaining from what had been a row of such structures located on the north side of the fort.

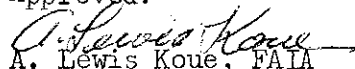
Prepared by,



John N. DeHaas, Jr.
Architect

May 1967

Approved:



A. Lewis Koue, FAIA
Supervisory Architect
Div. Historic Architecture
National Park Service